

The University of Edinburgh

**Minutes of the Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC) meeting  
held online on Thursday 25 November 2021 at 2.00pm**

**Present:**

Dr Paul Norris (Convener)	Dean of Quality Assurance and Curriculum Approval (CAHSS)
Professor Jeremy Crang	Dean of Students (CAHSS)
Kirsty Woomble	Head of PGR Student Office (CAHSS)
Professor Judy Hardy	Dean of Learning and Teaching (CSE)
Stephen Warrington	Dean of Student Experience (CSE)
Alex Laidlaw	Head of Academic Affairs (CSE)
Professor Antony Maciocia	Dean of Postgraduate Research (CSE)
Professor Jamie Davies	Dean of Taught Education (CMVM)
Dr Deborah Shaw	Dean of Students (CMVM)
Professor Patrick Hadoke	Director of Postgraduate Research and Early Career Research Experience (CMVM)
Tara Gold	Vice President Education, Students' Association
Dr Cathy Bovill	Senior Lecturer in Student Engagement, Institute for Academic Development (IAD)
Dr Adam Bunni	Head of Academic Policy and Regulation, Academic Services
Sarah McAllister	Student Systems and Administration

**In attendance:**

Ailsa Taylor (Secretary)	Academic Policy Officer, Academic Services
Lisa Dawson	Director of Student Systems and Administration
Isabel Lavers	Academic Administration Manager (CMVM)
Sudha Mani	PCIM and SSPT Project Team
Professor Ian Underwood	Director of International Partnerships, School of Engineering
Tom Ward	Head of Education Administration and Change Management, Edinburgh Futures Institute

**Apologies for absence:**

Philippa Burrell	Head of Academic Administration (CMVM)
Stuart Lamont	Observer, Students' Association

**1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 23 September 2021 were approved as an accurate record.

**2. Matters Arising**

- a) **Convener's Action – School of Engineering Joint PhD Award (19 November 2021)** Dr Norris had taken Convener's Action on 19 November 2021 in relation to a situation regarding a single student currently registered on a joint PhD degree at a University in China.

- b) Electronic Business – Special circumstances – late deadlines (3-8 November 2021)** A paper concerning special circumstances deadlines and their alignment with the results publication dates had been approved by the Committee by electronic business between 3-8 November 2021. It was agreed that special circumstances deadline dates should be debated more widely by the Committee at the next meeting in January 2021, so that a longer term decoupling of the special circumstances deadlines and the University's key dates could be considered further.
- 3. Edinburgh Futures Institute (EFI) – revised curriculum approval arrangements (APRC 21/22 2A)**

Professor Judy Hardy chaired this item, given Dr Norris' involvement in this area.

Mr Tom Ward presented this item. The Committee approved the proposed changes to the membership and operation of the EFI Curriculum Oversight Board (subject to further consideration by EFI in relation to the possibility of greater student representation on the Board). It was further agreed to allow the Board to operate on this basis for the next three sessions (2021/22-2023/24). At the end of 2023/24 EFI would work with the Board Convener and Deputy Convener to evaluate the effectiveness of arrangements and report back to the Committee; the Committee would also have the option to conduct a review at an earlier point, if that was felt to be necessary or desirable.

**4. Extensions and Special Circumstances (ESC) Service Review (APRC 21/22 2B)**

Ms Lisa Dawson presented this item.

The approach to the forthcoming ESC service review would be to gather detailed information from every school via a survey, perform desktop analysis to inform topics for discussion, observe processes and use of systems in Schools (e.g. in preparation for Semester 1 exam boards), and meet with Teaching Office managers and nominated relevant academic colleagues. Recommendations would be produced for consideration by an oversight group. The desired outcome of the review was for:

- A more consistent (and better) student experience;
- Greater confidence in ESC system and service;
- Greater consistency in practices across schools;
- More common understanding of policy and application of policy across Academic and Professional Services staff;
- Schools and ESC to have shared ownership of the process, ideally supported by community of practice;
- Time saving realised in schools and ESC service;
- A greater understanding and visibility of benefits of ESC.

The review was to be supported by resource from Student Systems and the ESC team, and an oversight group would be formed to oversee and review the recommendations of this review. APRC would be updated on progress and asked to input into the review at various intervals over the remainder of the current academic year.

The Committee agreed that they were content to receive information about the Extensions and Special Circumstances Review at regular intervals at the remaining APRC meetings during this academic year, with a 'drip-feed' approach, to allow Committee members to fully advise at key stages of the review.

**5. CSE: Joint Institute between University of Edinburgh and Huazhong University of Science and Technology, China: early Notification to APRC (CLOSED – C)**

Professor Ian Underwood presented this closed paper, and received advice and feedback from members regarding development of the collaboration.

**6. Including Publications in Postgraduate Research Theses - Updated Guidance (APRC 21/22 2E)**

Kirsty Woomble presented this item. The paper was approved, subject to an amendment with regards to guidance on copyright which was to be sought from the library.

<b>ACTION: Kirsty Woomble and Susan Hunter to seek advice from the library about replacement wording regarding copyright.</b>
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**7. Any Other Business**

**Student Support project- policy amendments**

Dr Adam Bunni updated the Committee on the plans for policy and regulatory review following input from the student support project later in the academic year. Some items identified for review on the student support project list were not owned by APRC but by other Senate Committees, or were items that were not owned by any of the Senate Committees, or had fallen out of use. Some of the documents identified (e.g. the Degree and Assessment Regulations), came to the Committee at specific times each year, so a request had been made to the student support project team to incorporate suggested changes to these items at the relevant times, to tie in with the annual review cycle. Dr Bunni anticipated that batches of policy documents would come to the next three APRC Committee meetings in January 2021, March 2021 and May 2021, for review.

**Industrial action**

Dr Adam Bunni noted that the Committee was not being asked to consider any concessions by the Academic Contingency Group (ACG) at the present time in relation to the forthcoming UCU industrial action, based on the nature of the scheduled industrial action. However, this may change, if the nature of the action changed. Guidance for staff had recently been issued by ACG via a dedicated SharePoint site; Committee members reflected on some of the content of this guidance in relation to replacement examiners for Doctoral and MPhil oral examinations (which was unchanged from previous guidance regarding industrial action, but had the potential to cause some practical challenges). It was recognised by the Committee that the timescales were such that this would not impact on the latest round of industrial action, given how the guidance was worded in relation to timescales ("It would be necessary to allow a replacement External Examiner a minimum of two weeks to read the thesis and prepare for the oral examination"), and

the fact that the forthcoming strike action was to take place within a two week period. However, it was noted that colleagues on APRC would be welcome to feed any reflections or comments back to ACG for any future iterations of the guidance beyond this semester.

**CMVM: External Examiners for PhD examination**

Professor Hadoke updated the Committee on a change in practice to the requirement for two External Examiners in CMVM for PhD students, which was caused by a change in landscape for some of their PhD students. This would not require any change to regulations. CMVM had traditionally required two External Examiners for members of staff. However, there were some clear instances where flexibility was appropriate (for example; with Marie Curie Fellows where the funder required the student to be appointed as a member of staff, but they completed their research full-time). For many of these students, requiring two External Examiners appeared to be excessive. CMVM planned to introduce a system which allowed them to identify as early as possible whether a student would need one or two External Examiners (with review if circumstances changed). Where necessary, any lingering concerns about conflict of interest would be covered by appointing a Non-examining Chair (NEC).

**Senate Committee membership**

Dr Norris updated the Committee on recent discussions at Senate regarding Senate committee membership, and encouraged members to input into the longer-term review of this matter at the appropriate time.